

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

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SUBJECT: PRESBYTERIAN MODERATOR CRITICIZES GOVERNMENT
ON SECURITY AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

REF: BELFAST 104

1. DR. JACK WEIR MODERATOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND, REPRESENTING ONE-QUARTER OF THE POPULATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND MET WITH SECRETARY OF STATE ROY MASON MARCH 30. BOTH MEN LATER ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENTS. REFLECTING RESOLUTIONS PASSED RECENTLY BY PRESBYTERIAN AREA GROUPS AND CHURCH COURTS DR. WEIR IS QUOTED AS HAVING SAID THAT PEOPLE BELIEVED THE GOVERNMENT WAS FAILING IN ITS BASIC SECURITY DUTIES AND DID NOT DESERVE THE NAME OF GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO WEIR, THE SITUATION HAS BECOME MUCH WORSE UNDER DIRECT RULE THAN IT WAS DURING THE STORMONT PERIOD. HE DESCRIBED THE WIDENING NATURE OF VIOLENCE RECENTLY. THE FAILURE TO GIVE ULSTER PEOPLE EVEN AN ILLUSION OF INVOLVEMENT IN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR SITUATION IS A RECIPE FOR IRRESPONSIBILITY, HE SAID. DR. WEIR SUGGESTED ESTABLISHING

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A CONSULTATIVE OR ADVISORY COUNCIL OF STATE BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE CONVENTION ELECTION. HE SAID THAT MANY PRESBYTERIANS WOULD SUPPORT AN AGREED SYSTEM OF POWER-SHARING IN A DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT BUT WOULD NOT RPT NOT SUPPORT ENFORCED POWER-SHARING. A COUNCIL OF STATE WOULD, DR. WEIR BELIEVED, GIVE A MEASURE OF POWER-SHARING IN PRACTICE. IN HIS STATEMENT MR. MASON REPEATED ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO RPT NO ECONOMIC OR MILITARY

WITHDRAWAL AND PLEDGED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MAINTAIN ITS DETERMINATION TO PROVIDE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SECURITY. HE ALSO CITED RECENT FAVORABLE STATISTICS ON ARRESTS AND POINTED OUT ONLY FORTY PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED SO FAR THIS YEAR IN CONTRAST TO 91 FOR THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR. THE SECRETARY OF STATE DID NOT MENTION THE SUGGESTED COUNCIL OF STATE BUT IT CAN BE ASSUMED THOUGHT WILL BE GIVEN TO IT. IT IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW FEASIBLE PROPOSALS FOR POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT TO COME FORTH SINCE THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

2. THE BELFAST NEWS LETTER (PROTESTANT/LOYALIST) IN LEADING EDITORIAL MARCH 31 CITED GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ASSIST INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE AND TO ALLEVIATE UNEMPLOYMENT AND SUBSTANDARD HOUSING CONDITIONS AS "CONVINCING PROOF OF A REALISTIC AND SYMPATHETIC APPROACH BY WESTMINSTER TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE PROVINCE." THE EDITORIAL CONTINUED HOWEVER WITH AN ATTACK ON SECURITY POLICY AND ON AN "UNDERLYING UNWILLINGNESS TO ACT FIRMLY AND DECISIVELY TO BRING (VIOLENCE) TO AN END."

3. THERE ARE NOW ABOUT 1000 MEMBERS ULSTER DEFENSE FORCE (UDR) ON FULL-TIME DUTY IN COUNTIES LONDONDERRY AND ANTRIM. GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING CALLED UP FIRST UNITS OF ABOUT 500 MEN TWO WEEKS AGO AND HAS GRADUALLY EXPANDED FORCE. UDR VERY NOTICEABLE AT ROAD BLOCKS AND ACTIVE IN VEHICLE SEARCHES. EFFECTIVENESS IS LIMITED HOWEVER SINCE TERRORISTS WILL GO TO GROUND AND AWAIT RETURN OF UDR MEN AND OFFICERS TO REGULAR CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT.

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